Good afternoon Mayor, Council members, and members of the MRA board.

My name is Chad Bauer President and CEO of the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce and I'm here today in support of the Midtown Commons development project.

The Chamber supports this project because it reflects something Missoula says it wants more of: housing choices, walkable neighborhoods, public spaces, and thoughtful infill development instead of endless sprawl. Midtown Commons brings those goals together in one place. The proposal includes a mix of townhomes, condos, apartments, and single-family homes, along with neighborhood-serving commercial space, trail connections, sidewalks, lighting, and a new public park.

One of the most important things about this project is location. This is exactly where density makes sense — near existing infrastructure, transit corridors, businesses, schools, trails, and services. Residents will be able to walk or bike to daily needs instead of adding more traffic from long-distance commuting at the edge of town. That's good planning, and it aligns with the Midtown Master Plan and Our Missoula 2045 goals.

I also appreciate that the project includes a significant public benefit. The planned neighborhood park and Bitterroot Trail connections create community space that will serve both current and future residents. The city and Parks Department have already gone through public engagement and design workshops to gather neighborhood input, which matters.

I know some people are concerned about growth, traffic, or change. Those are reasonable conversations to have. But the reality is that Missoula is growing whether we build thoughtfully or not. If we reject projects like this in the urban core, growth simply gets pushed farther outward, housing becomes even more expensive, and we lose opportunities to create connected neighborhoods.

No single project will solve Missoula's housing challenges, but adding 150 to 200 housing units in a central location is meaningful progress. More supply across different housing types helps stabilize costs over time and creates opportunities for working families, young professionals, seniors, and people who want to stay in Missoula but currently have limited options.

I also want to recognize that this project is the result of years of planning, collaboration, and public process. It reflects adopted city plans rather than ad hoc development. Supporting Midtown Commons means supporting the vision the community has already spent years creating.

I encourage you to move this project forward and continue investing in housing, parks, walkability, and vibrant mixed-use neighborhoods in Midtown Missoula.

Thank you for your time.